

Frequently Asked Questions about the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)

What type of test is the ITBS?

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is a nationally standardized, norm-referenced test (NRT).

What is does “nationally standardized” mean?

A nationally standardized test is a test that each test-taker is administered in the same way across a specified reference population (e.g., age groups, grade groups, etc.). Therefore, the score interpretations are based on a comparison of the test taker’s performance to the performance of other students in the nation.

What is a norm-referenced test (NRT)?

It is a NRT because it compares students’ abilities rather than to a criteria. Thus, the ITBS allows educators to get a look at the performance of their students in relation to the rest of the nation. A NRT is designed to highlight achievement differences between and among students.

How valid and reliable is the ITBS?

The ITBS was developed at the University of Iowa, and is based on over seventy years of on-going research.

What does the ITBS measure?

The ITBS measures the skills and achievement of students from kindergarten through grade eight and provides an in-depth measure of important educational objectives. It also yields reliable and comprehensive information both about the development of students’ skills and about their ability to think critically. It measures students against their peers.

Test subjects in the ITBS are in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. It is administered at the beginning of the school year to Utah students enrolled in grades three, five, and eight. In the spring, the ITBS reading test is administered to grade three.

What types of results does the ITBS give on the student report?

The ITBS produces developmental standard scores (SS) (i.e., scaled scores), and percentile ranks.

What does the developmental standard score (SS) mean?

The developmental standard score (SS) is a number that describes a student’s location on a scale. The table below shows the standard scores that correspond

to average performance (mean) of grade groups on the ITBS in the autumn of the school year.

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (Survey Battery with Social Studies and Science, Form B)

Fall Administration: Mean of the Developmental Standard Score (SS)

Grade	3	5	8
• Reading Total	176	206	244
• Language Total	176	206	244
• Mathematics Total	174	205	243
• Survey Battery Total	176	206	244
• Social Studies	175	205	243
• Science	175	205	243

What is a national percentile rank (NPR) score?

A national percentile rank score compares the achievement of a student or a group of students to the achievement of a national sample of students who are in the same grade and who were tested at the same time of the year (fall, midyear, or spring). For example, if a student earned a percentile rank of 72 on the science test, it means she scored higher than 72 percent of the students in the group with which she is being compared.

What is the “Core Total” score?

A Core Total score is reported for both The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and The Iowa Tests of Educational Development. The Core Total score is the average of the Reading, Language and Mathematics test scores. The tests cover the following areas:

- Reading: Vocabulary + Reading Comprehension
- Language: Spelling + Capitalization + Punctuation + Usage/Expression
- Mathematics: Concepts/Estimation + Problem Solving/Data Interpretation + Computation.

What is the “Total Composite” score?

A Total Composite score is reported for both The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and The Iowa Tests of Educational Development. The Total Composite score is the average of the Reading, Language, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science test scores.

- Total Composite: Reading + Language + Math + Social Studies + Science